

INTERVIEWING TIPS & STRATEGIES

Congratulations! You have been selected for an interview; the employer views you as a viable candidate for the position. This is your opportunity to shine and let the employer know that you are the best candidate for the job.

Interviews can be intimidating as they are a critical component of the hiring process. But don't be discouraged. Here are some tips to make it a successful experience and ultimately help land you a job offer.

The keys to a successful interview are: **Preparation, preparation, and preparation.**

The more you plan, research, practice and rehearse prior to an interview, the more likely it is you will excel and impress your potential employer.

Here are some tips to consider:

Before the interview

1. Research the position

- Where is the office located at?
- Who is conducting the interview?
- What are the services performed?
- Who are the customers?
- What is the company's philosophy?
- What is the company's history?

Note: Make sure to read the company's Website, especially the "About Us" page. Review press releases and set up a Google alert search to be notified of news article related to the company. Contact people you may know who work at the company or are former employees.

2. Prepare for the actual interview

- Inventory your skills, knowledge and experience. Know what sets you apart from other potential candidates.
- Review the job announcement thoroughly.
- Prepare materials (resume, references, and work samples for show-and-tell)
- Practice, practice and practice your answers and questions (rehearse with someone or record yourself)
- Decide what to bring (your interview "kit")
- The obvious (sleep, food, dress, travel time, route, parking, kit, etc.,)

Note: Your dress and personal appearance is important. Dress as if you were going to work in the job you're interviewing for. When in doubt, dress up and dress conservatively. Cleanliness and good personal hygiene will help establish rapport with the interviewer.

Bring a note pad and pen to take notes. Don't bring a big briefcase, but rather a small portfolio containing only the materials you need for that interview. This is your "Interview Kit", take care in assembling it.

THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Wouldn't it be nice if you had the interview questions before your interview? Well, here they are. Interview questions will fall into these five broad categories. In your preparation, if you prepare answers for each of these areas you should cover just about any question asked. Refer frequently to your past experience (what you've done), since past performance is the best indicator of future performance.

1. Why are you here? What is it about this place or job that attracts you?
2. What can you do for us? What do you have to contribute to what we do?
3. What distinguishes you from the other people being considered?
4. Will you fit in? Will you get along with, or irritate, all my other employees?
5. Can we afford you?

Note: Be ready to answer oddball questions as well. Typically employers who use off-the-wall questions are trying to figure out how you react under stress and determine your thought processes, along with your approach to solving problems. When presented with these types of questions, stay calm and don't worry about providing the "right" answer, it may not exist. Let your personality and confidence in your abilities speak for yourself. Examples of odd questions could be: "If you could be any animal, what would you be and why?" or "How many lightbulbs are in this building?"

LAST MINUTE CHECK

- Bring your resume, notepad, pen, business cards, etc.
- Be on time! Don't arrive later than 10 minutes before the interview.
- Get your game face on (attitude and demeanor)
 - Be positive, up-beat and SMILE
 - Breathe, relax, visualize
 - Think of the interview as a two-way conversation
- The best way to accomplish all of this is through your PREPARATION

Note: First Impressions are critical. For Internal candidates, your reputation (current performance) will precede you, but remember that first impressions are still critical.

During the interview:

- Expectations

Every hiring manager expects to be impressed during the interview. Don't disappoint them. Prepare and deliver. Remember, your goal is to connect the dots between who you are and what's required by the job. How well you connect those dots will determine your success in the interview.

- Your entrance/show self-confidence

As an entrance strategy, you should have a prepared "elevator speech" that communicates the essence of who you are and what you can offer in as much time as it takes to ride the elevator from the 1st floor to the 5th floor.

- Body language

Be mindful of your body language. You want to project a forward-looking and enthusiastic image. Sit up, lean forward, don't cross your legs and don't fidget. Much of what you communicate is through body language, not words.

- Respond thoughtfully, specifically and concisely

Listen to the questions, pause, formulate your answer and then speak. Reflect before answering (silence is ok). You should be able to answer just about any question in about 2 minutes. Anything longer than that could be viewed as rambling.

- Expect (and prepare for) the unexpected

Be prepared to talk about your weaknesses. Expect it and then respond with an honest and well prepared response.

Note: Your mission during the interview is to make the connection between who you are and what the job requires in such a way that the interviewer sees it clearly.

After the interview:

- Your departure
 - A firm handshake and a "thank you"
 - Reiterate your interest in the position and why.

Note: Send a thank you" note. Really! This simple act of courtesy can tip the scales in your favor. Send it so it gets there before the decision is made (i.e., the same day).

- Follow up with a phone call if you are not contacted within a reasonable time

Common mistakes

Be sure to avoid:

- Arriving late for the interview
- Looking disheveled and/or being inappropriately dressed
- Slouching in your seat (body language)
- Not making eye contact
- Not doing your research by asking, “So, what do you do here?”
- Failing to make the connection between your skills, knowledge and experience, and the job
- Bragging about how great you are without offering proof
- Responding in an unfocused or disorganized manner -- rambling
- Displaying no enthusiasm or interest for the job
- Answering with a simple “yes” or “no”
- Appearing desperate
- Talking negatively about your current/former boss or job
- Being overly familiar with those conducting the interview (using first names, inappropriate questions/comments, etc)
- Replying, “No” when asked, “Do you have any questions?”

Note: Do not talk down your current employment. It leaves a negative impression, no matter if it's true or not. Always have a list of several prepared questions ready for the interviewer. Remember, you're interviewing the interviewer as well, and they know it! Come prepared.

In summary, if you are to have any hope of being successful, you must assume the others interviewing for the position are as qualified as you on paper. The determining factor will probably be how much you are willing to prepare and how well you present yourself in the interview. Think of it as a sales call and be sure to close the sale.